

March 16, 2022

Dear Chairs Horn and Osten, Vice Chair Paolillo, Ranking Members Champagne and Howard, and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

My name is Laura Berkowitz Gilbert. I am a resident of Guilford and I'm writing in support of HB 5420, AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF AND SERVICES FOR POLICE OFFICERS, CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS REGARDING POLICE TRAINING AND CERTAIN REPORTS.

As awareness among mental health needs grows, so should access to this care for police officers whose occupation may directly expose them to trauma and increased need of services. Mental health care services should not be subject to discrimination and receipt for officers should be safely available.

Additionally, increased funding to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is necessary to help support nonprofit organizations like the CT Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement (CABLE) to expand Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for police officers. CABLE teaches the Memphis Model for CIT training. The Memphis Model practice guide recommends a CIT training coordinator as a key component to an infrastructure that supports an improved crisis response system. Police department CIT coordinators can act as liaison between all CIT partners, ensure adherence to policies, engage officers to participate in training as appropriate and provide ongoing mentoring. I support every department having a Crisis Intervention Team Coordinator to oversee CIT activity and help appropriately enroll officers into the training. CIT training is necessary for police officers to appropriately assess and interact with people who have emerging or existing mental illness. It is vital to fair and just treatment for all.

I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

Laura Berkowitz Gilbert